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CHAPTER XXII.

OF A CERTAIN DISEASE PECULIAR TO THE ABIPONES.

During an eighteen years' acquaintance with Paraguay and its inhabitants, I discovered a disease amongst the Abipones Nakaiketergehes, entirely unknown elsewhere. This disease affects the mind more than the body, though I should think it occasioned by the bad temperature of the former. They sometimes begin to rave and storm like madmen. The credulous and superstitious crowd think them reduced to this state by the magic arts of jugglers, and call them *Loapañaika*. These persons, agitated, as I think, by the intemperature of black bile, and filled with gloomy ideas, betray their madness chiefly at sun-set. The distracted persons suddenly leap out of their tents, run into the country on foot, and direct their course straight to the burying-place of their family. In speed they equal ostriches, and those who pursue them on the swiftest horses can hardly overtake and bring them home. Seized with fury in the night, they burn with the desire of committing slaughter somewhere; and for this purpose

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158 snatch up any arms they can lay hold of. Hence, as soon as a report is spread through a town of any one's being seized with this kind of madness, every body takes up a spear. The horsemen, as they can neither calm the furious man, nor keep him at home, suffer him to go out into the street, armed with a stick, and accompanied with as many people as possible. A crowd of boys assembling to behold the spectacle, they make a circuit about all the streets. The insane person strikes the roof and mats of every tent again and again with the stick, none of the inmates daring to utter a word. If through the negligence of his guards, or his own cunning, he gets possession of arms, Heavens! what a universal terror is excited! a terror not confined to women and unwarlike boys, but felt by men who account themselves heroes; for they say it is wrong and irrational to use arms against those who are not in possession of their senses. The women, therefore, with their children used to crowd to the court-yard of our house which was fortified with stakes against the assaults of savages, and through fear of the insane person, pass hours, nay whole nights there.

Persons seized with this madness take scarcely any food or sleep, and walk up and down pale with fasting and melancholy: you

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would imagine that they were contemplating some new system of the figure of the earth, or studying how to square the circle. By day, however, they betray no signs of alienation of mind, nor are they to be feared before evening. A person of this description, who was very turbulent at night, visited me in the middle of the day. In familiar conversation I asked him who it was that disturbed the rest by his furiousness every night. He replied with a calm countenance, that he did not know. The Spaniard, my companion, seeing him take his leave, said, "This is the man you have long wished to know. This is he that raves at night." Yet I could discover nothing indicative of derangement either in his countenance or manners. Another insane person of the kind, whom I knew, met me as we were both riding in the plain, and joined company with me. But, pretending business, I put spur to my horse and hastened home. Twice when I was shutting the door of my hut, and once when I was tying a horse to a stake to feed, I should have been destroyed by a madman, had not persons come to my succour and averted the danger. Sometimes many persons of both sexes began to rave at once; sometimes one, and often no one was in this deplorable state. This madness lasted eight, fourteen, or more days, before tranquil-

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158 lity and intellect were restored. All the Abipones subject to this malady, whom I have known, were uniformly of a melancholy turn of mind, always in a state of perturbation from their hypochondriac or choleric temper, and of a fierce, threatening countenance. When this bile was excited by bad air, or immoderate drinking, it is neither strange nor surprising, that derangement and raving madness ensued. The stupid or ignorant alone attribute that to magic art, which is solely to be ascribed to the fault or strength of nature.

158 We have found the fear of death a powerful
57 antidote to the licence of raving amongst the
62 Abipones. Within a few days the number of mad persons increased unusually: one of them in the dead of the night got through the fence, and was stealing into our house, but was carried away by people who came to our assistance. Alaykin, the chief Cacique, being informed of our danger, called all the people into the market-place next day, and declared, that if any one henceforward took to raving, he should immediately put to death all the female jugglers, as well as the insane themselves. From that time I never heard of any more tumults occasioned by these furious persons. Might not some of them have feigned madness in the first instance, because they

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loved to be objects of terror to their hordes- 158
men, and to be pointed at with the finger? 579
I never can believe with the savages, that a 626
magical charm was the cause of their insanity.